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DAILY

FULTON COUNTY DAILY REPORT

Parsing the Ramus Jury's Guilty Verdicts

BY LOLITA BROWNING
Staff Reporter

Difficulty understanding the difference between criminal and civil fraud was one reason it took a jury three days to return guilty verdicts against failed Buckhead art dealer David S. Ramus, according some of its members.

The 11-member jury reached its verdicts Wednesday evening, only minutes before U.S. District Court Judge Frank M. Hull was expected to declare a mistrial.

Jurors said their time in the jury room was spent poring over evidence and explaining to one another the definitions of fraud, conversion and other legal terms.

"We saw a lot of money coming in and very little going out," said Mary Lou Applegarth, a registered nurse.

Also significant was the testimony of one particular witness, according to juror Roger Watley. That witness was Michael Rose, a former Ramus employee, who testified that Ramus instructed him to lie to a customer about a painting belonging to that customer that had been sold.



In three days of deliberations over legal terminology and evidence, jurors went from being evenly split to convicting art dealer David S. Ramus of defrauding clients.

The customer was Jean-Pierre Guillaume, a photographer from Paris, who was the only one of the high-profile clients allegedly bilked by Ramus to wait in court each day for the verdict.

"I feel that justice has been done," Guillaume said after the jury came

back. "Now I will see how I will get my painting or my money back."

Although jurors returned a not-guilty verdict on count three of the three-count indictment, Assistant U.S. Attorney David C. Nutter says he is pleased with the verdict.

Nutter said it was "the pattern of lies" that led the jury to convict Ramus on two counts. "It was not an isolated incident. We were able to show a pattern," Nutter said Thursday.

Defense 'Disappointed'

Defense attorney Edward T.M. Garland of Garland, Samuel & Loeb, who gave the jury a mini-sermon during his closing arguments about the history of juries, their responsibility and their power, had little to say after the verdict.

"I'm disappointed. I will continue to work on [Ramus'] behalf," Garland said. Ramus could to serve two to four years in prison, Garland said. A sentencing hearing is set for Jan. 18 at 9 a.m.



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FILE PHOTO

G16 Thursday, November 9, 1995 *****

LOCAL NEWS

Former art dealer will serve jail time

By Bill Rankin
STAFF WRITER

David Ramus, the former high-profile Buckhead art dealer who stunned the publishing world with a \$1 million advance for his first novel, will spend time behind bars after being found guilty Wednesday of defrauding former art clients.

"I'm very satisfied," said Jean-Pierre Guillaume, a retired Paris photographer who was defrauded of a \$160,000 painting by Ramus in 1991. "Justice is on its way. After all I did over the past years, I feel I got something out of it."

Guillaume doggedly pursued Ramus for repayment for his William Merritt Chase painting, "Wash Day in Brooklyn," and pressed for his prosecution. He is among dozens of creditors seeking money from Ramus in U.S. Bankruptcy Court, where records show Ramus owes more than \$4 million.

Ramus has pledged half his proceeds from "Thief of Light," a suspense novel about heroin addiction, greed and forgery in the art world, to repay his creditors.

During the 1980s, Ramus' Buckhead gallery made millions of dollars off the art market boom. All the while, he lived a lavish lifestyle and bought and sold paintings for Atlanta's cultural elite.

Defense lawyer Ed Garland said Ramus simply accumulated manageable debts when the art market turned sour and failed to pull the plug on his business

soon enough. He intended to repay everyone, Garland said.

"Sure, he was trying to keep his business afloat, but he was doing so by deceiving people and keeping their money," said jury forewoman Lana Nix, a high school teacher from Buford. "Some of his business deals looked stupid, but in many ways he was a very smart man."

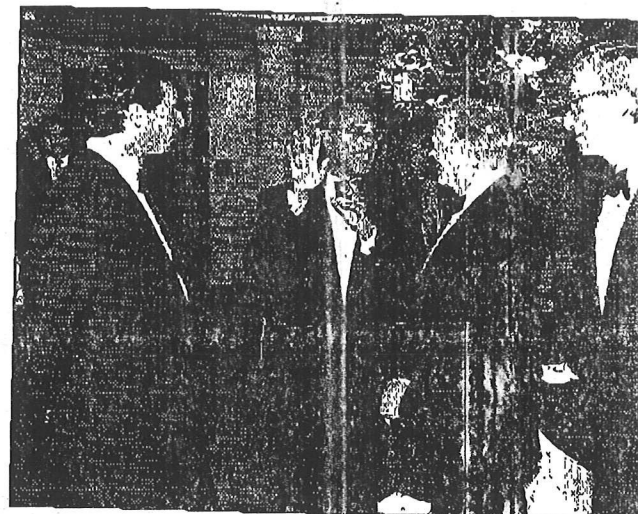
Assistant U.S. Attorney David Nutter said Ramus intentionally defrauded his clients of more than \$1 million in paintings. Ramus took their paintings to sell for profit on consignment, only to sell them and fail to reimburse the clients. "We felt like this was a case about breach of trust," Nutter said.

Ramus, 40, began the trial with an air of confidence, but as jury deliberations wore on he was subdued and admitted he was frazzled. After the verdict was read, he turned to his wife and mother seated in court behind him and mouthed, "I'm sorry." His wife, Cathy, who helped him write the novel, sobbed quietly into a white handkerchief.

Hull scheduled sentencing for Jan. 18. Federal prosecutors said Ramus faces two to four years in prison.

Although they found Ramus guilty, many jurors will soon be making a trip to bookstores — at least six said they will buy his new novel.

"I have to admit, I'm real curious about it," said one juror, Laura Frazier of Decatur. "I can't wait to read it."



PHILIP MCCO

CARE honors Carter

Former President Jimmy Carter (second from right) talks with (from left) Cox Enterprises Chairman James C. Kennedy, Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell, CARE President Peter Bell on Wednesday at the Presidential Center at a dinner marking the 50th anniversary of the worldwide relief organization and honoring Carter for his efforts toward world peace.

TAP reorganization 'official'

By John Blake
STAFF WRITER

The Atlanta Project's policy advisory board accepted a committee's recommendation Wednesday to dramatically reshape TAP beginning next year.

The committee, commissioned by former President Jimmy Carter, worked six months before concluding that TAP should continue beyond its projected end of October 1996.

The committee recommended that TAP work more closely with social service groups in Atlanta and confine

its focus to helping and families.

TAP's next phase is the fall of 1996. "It's said Jane Smith, TAP program director. "We go to the planning pro

One of the most comprehensive recommendations, scrapping cluster system, will not effect until Aug. 31, s. Under the current TAP has divided its area into 20 community clusters. Under arrangement, much work will be done from offices dubbed "mini-coalition centers."

New criteria for 'gifted' students

By Betsy White

James W. Alexander
Retired UGA department